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ABSTRACT

Training courses for teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL) at the elementary and secondary levels, implemented in Brunei in 1989, are described, and proposals for a new teacher certification level are examined. The first course leads to a diploma in elementary/secondary ESL teaching, and is characterized by both written and practical work done only internally, a series of small essay examinations replacing the traditional final examination, and content and methods emphasizing the teaching of young learners. It is intended to upgrade the skills of experienced teachers. A certificate course was designed for inexperienced ESL teachers, especially non-native speakers, consisting of language improvement and methodology components. Two proposals for training of qualified teachers without formal training in ESL instruction include one for training oriented to specific age groups (5-10, 11-14, and 15-17 years) and one that makes no distinction between native English-speaking and non-native teachers. Both are assessed and found inadequate. These and other considerations in designing ESL teacher training curricula are outlined. (MSE)

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ELT Courses for Teachers of Young Learners: Some Recent Developments

Paul Steinhausen

Abstract

A big growth area in ELT is teaching English as a foreign or second language to **children**. In the past, teacher training courses such as those administered by Cambridge/RSA have concentrated mainly on the adult end of the market. More recently, however, courses aimed specifically at teachers of **young** learners have been burgeoning.

My paper will start by detailing the Cambridge/RSA Diploma and Certificate courses at Primary or Secondary level that CfBT Education Services has been running for its teachers in Brunei since 1989. I shall outline the organisation and content of these courses, and show how they have developed over the three years.

Widening out from this, I shall then examine the recent proposals from Cambridge for a new Pre-ELT Certificate, designed for teachers with Qualified Teacher Status but with no previous ELT experience or training. I shall focus on the differences between this and established courses. In particular, I shall discuss in some detail the following two proposals:

1. *That the Pre-ELT Course should be divided into three age-bands: 5-10 (Primary); 11-14 (Secondary); 15-17 (Young Adults).*
I shall argue that for a variety of reasons, not least because of particular local situations, we need to be more flexible.

2. *That the course should make no distinction between native and non-native English speakers in its entry requirements.*
While accepting the principle, I shall argue that in some circumstances this may be impractical and even undesirable.

In conclusion, my paper will tie together the strands of past and present courses for teachers of young learners, in order to look at what the model for such courses is likely to be in the future.

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Introduction

Probably the most widely recognised TEFL qualifications worldwide are the RSA Certificate and RSA Diploma administered by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) in UK. Until quite recently, these have catered for teachers of adult learners, because that was where the greatest demand was.

There is, however, a burgeoning interest in teaching English as a Foreign Language to children. In Brunei, C*f*BT Education Services has been running Diploma and Certificate RSA TEFL courses aimed specifically at teachers of young learners. I have been involved in the setting up and teaching of both.

The Background

C*f*BT is responsible for nearly 200 mainly British and Australians working in Bruneian Upper Primary (Classes 4,5,6) and Lower Secondary (Forms 1,2,3) schools as English language teachers. In 1987, we began to think seriously about setting up an RSA Diploma course for our teachers. The Dip TEFLA was clearly unsuitable, because they were not teaching adults. So a course for teachers of young learners was proposed, approved by UCLES, and a pilot course began in January 1989 with 32 candidates (16 primary, 16 secondary) and 8 tutors. Its full title was the Diploma in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language at Primary/Secondary Level (Dip TEFL P/S). At that time, the nearest equivalent courses were a Diploma run by the British Council in Singapore for local teachers in the Teaching of English as a Second Language in Secondary Schools (RSA Dip TESS) and a course run in Hong Kong for native speakers teaching EFL in overseas secondary schools (RSA Dip TEFLOSS). Our course in Brunei was unique in bringing together primary teachers and secondary teachers, and in attempting to bridge the gap between the two.

RSA Dip TEFL P/S

The course is now in its fifth year. The latest began in January and will finish in September. It consists of the following components:

INPUT

1. 40 x 2 hour seminars. (See Appendix 1)
2. 10 x 2 hour tutorials.

WRITTEN WORK

1. 6 written assignments (2000-3000 words)
2. A Project - to allow participants to explore a topic in some depth, as in the approach embodied in the concept of Action Research.
3. 3 mini-examinations. Candidates must achieve a clear pass in four questions altogether, including at least one in Language Analysis.

PRACTICAL WORK

1. 6 internally assessed observations. At least four should be of pass standard, including two of the final three.
2. 4 peer observations. Candidates submit a report on each.

Three aspects in particular should be noted. First, all written and practical work is set and assessed **internally**, with external moderation only. Second, the one-off final examination (which was a feature of our first two courses, in 1989 and 1990) has evolved into a series of mini-examinations - or timed essays - which we feel is more appropriate to the developmental and otherwise continuously assessed nature of the course. Third, the course programme, with its emphasis on, for instance, child language acquisition, classroom management (including discipline and dealing with large classes) and activity-based lessons, takes into account that our teachers are working with children, not adults.

The Diploma course has proved popular and, we believe, successful in upgrading the knowledge and skills of the experienced EFL teachers we employ. But what of the inexperienced EFL teachers? It soon became apparent to those of us involved in the Diploma that there was a gap that needed to be filled.

While all CfBT teachers must have at least two years' teaching experience when they join the organisation (and many have considerably more), a significant number, especially amongst the primary teachers, have no EFL experience or qualification. Yet it is English they must teach in Brunei. In the past, such teachers have been sent on a Cert TEFLA course in UK before coming to Brunei. Not surprisingly, the course has been found to be interesting but of limited relevance to teaching children in Brunei.

So we began to think about a Certificate course for Brunei. We looked at the options already offered by Cambridge. There appeared to be two:

Certificate for Overseas Teachers of English (COTE)
This is for non native English speaker EFL teachers who have started their careers recently. They may be teaching children or adults. They must have language proficiency of at least Cambridge First Certificate or equivalent. There are two components to the course:
1. LANGUAGE IMPROVEMENT. A course in English for classroom purposes.
2. METHODOLOGY. (a) Knowledge - of phonology, grammar, discourse etc.
(b) Practical ability - to apply knowledge in the classroom.

Certificate in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language to Adults (Cert TEFLA)
This is for native English speakers or those of equivalent competence. They should be teaching adults. There is no language improvement component. There is a methodology component similar to that on the COTE.

When it came to a course for our CfBT teachers, neither was suitable: the COTE, because it is for non native English speakers; the Cert TEFLA, because it is for teachers of adults.

Cert TEFL P/S
So we put forward a proposal for an RSA Certificate in TEFL at Primary/Secondary Level. This was approved by UCLES, and the pilot course ran from April to August 1992, with 21 candidates and four tutors.

The course is part-time, lasting a total of 103 hours comprising: 64 hours of seminars and workshops, taking place over 16 weekends; six hours of pre-TP counselling and six hours of post-TP feedback; six hours of observation of other teachers; and fifteen hours of tutorial group discussion. In addition, candidates have to produce two written assignments of about 1500 words

each on practical issues concerning classroom methods and materials, and a Project of about 3000 words identifying particular learner errors and evaluating ways of dealing with them. As with the Diploma, it is assessed internally, with an external moderator.

An important aspect of our Certificate course (and indeed of our Diploma course) is that it focuses specifically on teaching children. I do not intend to enter into a discussion here as to whether children or adults are better language learners. But there is little doubt that children learn **differently** from adults in terms of, for example, conceptual ability, interests, emotional maturity and attention span. Unlike most adult learners in language schools, schoolchildren may not feel that learning English is important, and motivation is often low. The demand on schoolteachers to stimulate and sustain interest is consequently greater.

Whereas adults might respond well to language-focussed activities, children often respond better to content-based lessons in which language may be 'acquired' naturally.

Young learners, not having developed the metalanguage necessary to cope with grammatical rules and explanations, are more likely to respond to repetition and memorisation with such techniques as singing, story telling, drama and model making. And so on. As with the Diploma, our Certificate seminar programme reflects these essential differences in the young learner. (See Appendix 2).

The Future

So far I have described courses, at Certificate and Diploma level, which are already up and running. I hope they will continue to run in the future. But UCLES is currently in the process of reviewing its TEFL courses. It is away from the past and towards the future that I wish to look in the remainder of this paper.

For our Certificate course, in particular, we receive a number of applications from local Bruneian teachers. Most of these have to be refused because UCLES' guidelines state that "candidates should have native or near-native speaker competence in English".

There is a problem here. Unless the aim in Brunei is for as many expatriate teachers as possible to be employed for as long as possible at as high a salary as possible - and I am sure it is not - then it would seem sensible to effect as much transfer of knowledge and expertise to local teachers as possible. At the moment, the courses we run fail to meet that demand.

This is where the new proposals from UCLES come in. Instead of, on the one hand, the present Dip TEFL and Cert TEFL schemes for native speakers, and, on the other hand, the DOTE and COTE schemes for non-native speakers, the following framework is suggested:

Advanced Diploma in TEFL
Diploma in TEFL
Higher Certificate in TEFL
Certificate in TEFL

It is at the Certificate level I wish to focus, particularly on the Pre-ELT Certificate for Teachers of Young Learners, which has recently been piloted in UK. It is aimed at teachers working with children aged 5 - 16 years old. In this respect, it is much the same as the Certificate Course already running in Brunei. But in another respect, it is quite different. In its entry requirements, it makes no distinction between native English speakers and non-native English speakers. It is for teachers who already have Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Such teachers, UCLES assumes, will already be aware of:

1. Basic aspects of child development (psychological, social, cognitive, emotional).
2. Motivation in children and its implications for learning.
3. Basic principles of locally appropriate classroom management.

In other words, they are trained teachers, only not specifically in ELT. The draft syllabus contains the following twelve topics:

1. The Educational/Linguistic Needs of Children
2. Second Language Acquisition
3. Describing Children's Language/Learning Needs
4. Describing Language Development
5. Describing Language and Language Processes
6. Classroom Techniques
7. Planning Lessons
8. Classroom Management
9. Managing Resources
10. Testing and Evaluation
11. The Place of English in School and Community
12. Teacher Self-development

That, of course, is the bare outline. The syllabus itself describes the core and non-core components of each topic in great detail, and it says exactly what candidates are expected to show an understanding of and an ability to do. It is impressive in its clarity. There are, however, two aspects about the proposed scheme which I have reservations about.

The first of these is to do with the breadth of age range of the students for which the teachers on the course are prepared. The proposed pre-ELT Certificate scheme is divided into three age bands: 5-10 (Primary); 11-14 (Secondary); 15- 17 (Young Adults). On our Certificate course in Brunei we have been more flexible in specifying the age of the students whom the participants teach.

Partly, the reason behind this is pragmatic. In Brunei, if a student fails his end of year examinations he repeats the whole year again. So one student may take twice as long as another student to get through the school system. It is therefore not uncommon for a teacher to have, in a single primary class, students of 16, students of 9 and students of various ages in between. That is, the teacher will have students from all three age bands in the same class. It would clearly,

then, be a disservice to the teachers taking our Certificate course to focus on one narrow age group, because in their day to day teaching they have to cope with a much wider range of ages. Indeed, it is one of the major problems they face. As Keith Morrow wrote in his article, "flexibility of format will be essential to cope with the variety of teaching contexts in which this course is likely to be offered". The question of age range is one which Cambridge will need to be flexible about if future Certificate courses in Brunei, and in other countries where a repeater system prevails, are to remain relevant.

Apart from this practical reason, however, we believe there is another argument to be made for having primary and secondary teachers on the same course. Giovanazzi (1991), writing about a pilot project for foreign languages in Scottish primary schools, emphasises the importance of close liaison between teachers in secondary schools and their feeder primary schools. This is pertinent to the EFL situation in Brunei, where our CfBT teachers are concentrated in upper primary and lower secondary. Feedback from participants on the course has indicated that they have found it extremely useful to know (for secondary teachers) the situation their students have come from or (for primary teachers) what their students are going to. Of course, there are fundamental differences in the way younger and older children learn, but there is no neat cut-off between primary and secondary. We have found it beneficial for our teachers to have knowledge of both.

The other aspect of the proposed pre-ELT Certificate which deserves some consideration is that it makes no distinction between native and non-native speakers. In principle, this is fine: the Cert TEFL versus COTE dichotomy has probably gone on too long. I have already stated that one of the disadvantages of the present courses is that we are unable to include many local teachers on them. But in practice there may be in some situations certain problems arising from mixing native and non-native speakers on the same course. Norma Dickinson (1991) writes of her experience in the Moray House Edinburgh TEFL programme that "we need to take particular account at the outset of our teachers' previous training experiences and try to ensure that we meet their needs as learners/trainees". While it seems sensible to have a similar ultimate aim for both native and non-native teachers on a Cert TEFL course, I am not convinced that the starting point is the same. If we take three basic elements of a TEFL training course as being (i) level of language proficiency, (ii) pedagogic skills and (iii) attitudes to learner participation, then more work is likely to need to be done with non-native speakers than with native speakers on (i) and possibly (iii). This would certainly be the case in Brunei. The criterion of QTS does not seem sufficient in itself. The training a Bruneian primary teacher has gone through to acquire QTS may be quite different (though no less stringent) than that undergone by a British primary teacher. To pitch a Certificate course for both groups of teachers together would be very difficult, and the likely outcome is that the needs of neither would be adequately catered for.

For the future, we look forward to expanding our schemes to include more local teachers. The integration of these with native English speaker teachers on the same course, however, needs careful thought, as we have seen. At the very least, it might be worth considering a return to the precisely specified levels of English competence required by COTE and DOTE, and also perhaps to a language improvement component taken by non-native speakers to run parallel to the methodology component taken by both native and non-native speakers. I note that the feedback to a questionnaire sent out by UCLES indicates that this is an area of the proposed new course that respondents generally feel needs reviewing.

In conclusion, I regard the proposals from Cambridge with great interest. As long as the flexibility afforded the 'old' Mode C schemes, to cater for local conditions, is extended to the new Pre-ELT Certificate, I am sure this is a model for the future.

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